



Textiles in a social context and First Textiles

Two conferences about prehistoric textiles

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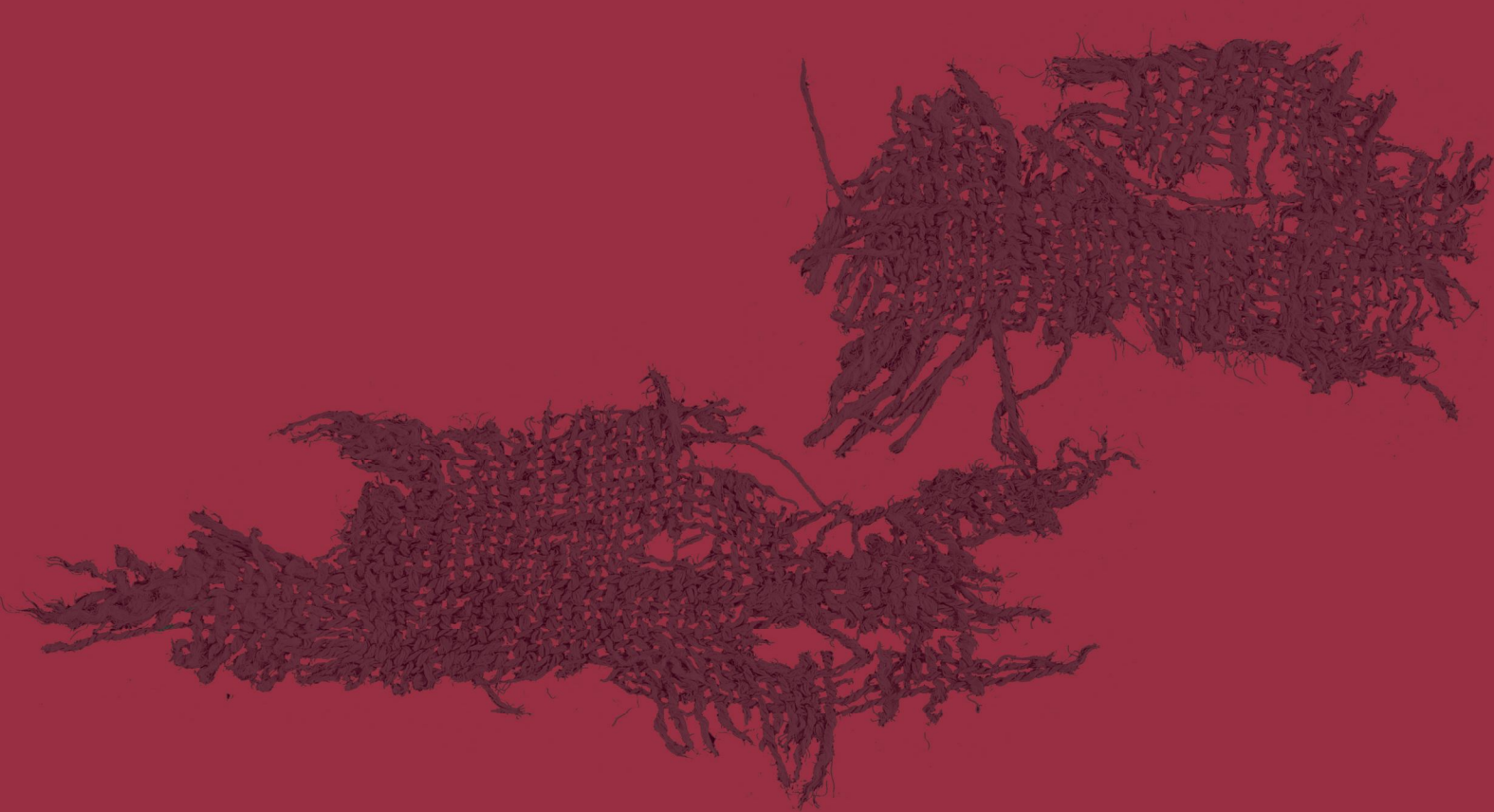
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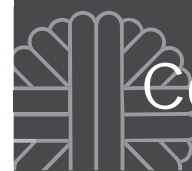
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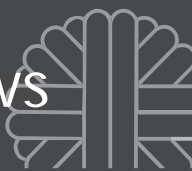
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Małgorzata Siennicka

Textiles in a Social Context and First Textiles – Two Conferences on Prehistoric Textiles

13 September 2014, Istanbul, Turkey and
7-8 May 2015, Copenhagen, Denmark

In 2013 the collaborative research project *First Textiles. The Beginnings of Textile Manufacture in Europe and the Mediterranean* was initiated by Małgorzata Siennicka at the Danish National Research Foundation's Centre for Textile Research, University of Copenhagen, Denmark (http://ctr.hum.ku.dk/economy/first_textiles/).

The project focuses on the beginnings of textile manufacture, tools and techniques, principally in the Neolithic and early Bronze Age in Europe and the Mediterranean. One of the main objectives is to review and systematise recent achievements in the field of research into the most ancient textiles and textile techniques and to set the agenda for further work. A main activity of the project is the organisation of two international scientific meetings and the subsequent publication of their proceedings.

The session *Textiles in a Social Context. Textile Production in Europe and the Mediterranean in the 4th and 3rd Millennia BCE* at the European Archaeologists' Association (EAA) conference in Istanbul in 2014 was organised by Małgorzata Siennicka together with Lorenz Rahmstorf from the Institute for Pre- and Protohistory, University of Mainz, Germany, now at the SAXO Institute, University of Copenhagen, Denmark and Agata Ulanowska from the Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw, now at the Centre for Research on Ancient Technologies at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences. The session aimed to explore the social context and cultural aspects of textile manufacture

and to present recent research on textiles based on archaeological, ethnographic, textual, iconographic and experimental evidence. The meeting comprised of 18 oral and three poster presentations (for a detailed summary of the presentations see also *The European Archaeologist* 43 (Winter) 2015, 41-44).

The chronological focus of the session was on the 4th and 3rd millennia BC in Europe and the eastern Mediterranean, divided into five sections on methodology, Anatolia and the Levant, the Aegean, the Carpathian Basin and the Balkans, as well as a poster session. The introduction by Lorenz Rahmstorf demonstrated various approaches used to investigate ancient textile production: ethnographic, iconographic, textual, contextual, experimental and material-typologic. In the methodology section several topics were discussed: ways of approaching textile production without preserved textiles or tools (E. Andersson Strand), studying textile impressions and imprints (S. Möller-Wiering), the famous iceman in the Ötztal Alps as a starting point for a discussion about regional and social variations in plant fibre technology, and the spread of textile techniques in Europe in around 3500 BC (E. Wigforss).

In the Anatolia and Levant session the following topics were explored: Neolithic Anatolian stamp 'seals' and their possible use in textile production (A.U. Türkcan), textiles and textile tools from the Chalcolithic Southern Levant (O. Shamir), textile production in Western Anatolia in the 4th and 3rd millennia BC (C. Britsch and



B. Horejs), textile manufacture at Arslantepe in Turkey during the 4th and 3rd millennia BC (R. Laurito), and secondary urbanisation and textile industry in the early Bronze Age in the northern Levant (L. Peyronel). In the third session on the Aegean, the focus was on iconographic evidence from Neolithic Greece (K. Sarri), the Cretan Neolithic and early Bronze Age evidence for the production of cloth (J. Cutler), archaeological evidence for textile production from the early Bronze Age in southern Greece (M. Siennicka), yarn production on the Aegean islands in the early Bronze Age (S. Vakirtzi), and the potential use of specialised band looms for weaving bands and starting borders in the Aegean (A. Ulanowska). The presentations in the last section on the Carpathian Basin and the Balkans treated the major Neolithic innovations in textile manufacture in south-eastern and central Europe (T.J. Chmielewski), textile tools and other implements possibly associated with textile manufacture during the late Neolithic and early Bronze Age in Bulgaria (P. Hristova), textile tools and the introduction of the woolly sheep in central and south-eastern Europe (A. Grabundzija), the extraordinary find of a mineralised woven structure from a burial tumulus in eastern Romania dating to the early Bronze Age (N. Bolohan, C. Lazanu and P. Mazăre) and important changes in weaving technology and the organisation of textile production in early Bronze-Age Bulgaria (V. Petrova). In the poster session we were introduced to atypical textile tools from Bulgaria (T. Valchev), woven fabrics in the Andronov costume (E. Usmanova) and semantic web ontologies for ancient textile production (F. Lynam).

The aim of the two-day international conference *First Textiles. The Beginnings of Textile Manufacture in Europe and the Mediterranean* in 2015 was to present and discuss recent achievements in the field of textiles and textile techniques in Europe and the Near East in the Neolithic, Chalcolithic and early Bronze Age (c. 8th-3rd millennia BC).

The first day of the conference was hosted by The Danish National Research Foundation's Centre for Textile Research at the University of Copenhagen. The first session was dedicated to fibres and textiles: textile plant production and trade (D. Fuller; S. Karg), development and changes in textile techniques from the Neolithic period to the Chalcolithic period in the southern Levant (O. Shamir), textile provenance investigations by isotopic tracing techniques (K.M. Frei), rare finds, unusual materials and different technologies for studying early textiles (L. Hurcombe), textiles from lacustrine Neolithic settlements at Lake Constance in south-west Germany (J. Banck-Burgess), the earliest cloth (skin and fur) culture in Denmark

(U. Mannering), and a review of clothing traditions in the southern Levant 13,500-4,000 BC (J. Levy). In the second session, experimental archaeology and cultural comparisons were discussed. Eva Andersson Strand introduced us to the world of the first looms. Karina Grömer dedicated her paper to experiments with Neolithic crescent-shaped loom weights from central Europe. Kalliope Sarri explored the subject of decorative craft transfer in the Aegean in the Neolithic (textiles, baskets and pots). Finally, the functionality of early Bronze Age weaving tools from Greece was discussed by Agata Ulanowska.

The second day of the conference was hosted by the National Museum of Denmark. This day was dedicated to textile production and textile tools from different archaeological sites and contexts. Miriam de Diego presented a joint paper on textile technology in the Neolithic site of La Draga, Spain (M. de Diego, A. Palomo, R. Piqué, M. Saña, X. Terradas, I. Clemente, M. Mozota). Textile production in western Europe from the late Neolithic to the early Bronze Age was discussed in detail by Fabienne Médard. Maria Irene Ruiz de Haro presented an overview of the use of spinning bowls from the Chalcolithic period (in the Balkans, Palestine and Egypt) to the Iron Age (Iberian Peninsula). Ana Grabundzija debated the symbolic and functional role of early spindle whorls from south-eastern Europe, while Giorgos Gavalas focused on textile production in the early Bronze Age in the Cyclades. Lisa Völling questioned the interpretation of early Bronze Age clay objects from Troy as spindle whorls. Textile implements from the Eskişehir region in north-western Anatolia were introduced by Deniz Sari. Carmen Marian presented an interpretation of textile impressions in clay on pottery, and finally Maria Rosaria Belgiorno summarised textile production in Pyrgos/Mavroraki on Cyprus c. 2,000 BC.

The proceedings of these two conferences will be published in 2016/2017 in a peer-reviewed volume edited by Małgorzata Siennicka, Agata Ulanowska and Lorenz Rahmstorf in the Ancient Textile Series published by Oxbow Books.